

## Should I exercise while I'm pregnant?

If you're an active person, you can be an active mother-to-be. Exercise is good for your heart and your mind. Plus, studies have shown, it's also good for your baby.



### What are the primary benefits to prenatal exercise?

Exercise is good for your heart. Studies have shown good heart health early in pregnancy is associated with better postpartum health.

#### Exercise during pregnancy may also:

- Help prevent postpartum depressive disorders.
- Give you more energy, improve your mood, and relieve stress.
- Decrease your risk of preeclampsia, gestational diabetes and having a Cesarean section.
- Help with back pain, ease constipation, help control ankle and leg swelling.
- Help you maintain a healthy weight during and after pregnancy.
- Prepare your body for labor and delivery with reduced duration of active labor.

### How much exercise do I need when I'm pregnant?

Recommendations for pregnant women are the same as for most people:

- 150 minutes per week of moderate aerobic activity (walking, dancing, gardening) or
- 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity (running, swimming, jumping rope) or a combination of both spread throughout the week

Talk to your health care professional. If you worked out more before you became pregnant, they will likely give you the okay to continue your routine.

### What's the best exercise for pregnant women?

- **Walking**—especially good if you're new to exercise; bring your pet along or call a friend or family member along the walk.
- **Swimming and water workouts**—these help you use different muscles without putting strain on your body.
- **Stationary cycling**—this beats on-road cycling because you're less likely to fall; as your belly gets bigger, balancing can be a challenge.
- **Yoga, Pilates and low-impact aerobic classes**—be sure to tell your instructor you're pregnant.

### What workouts should I avoid?

- **Contact sports**—to limit the chance of getting hit in the abdomen, steer clear of activities like martial arts, basketball, ice hockey, etc.
- **Hot yoga class**—you don't want to overheat
- **Activities where you could fall** (skiing, off-road cycling and horseback riding)

## Under what circumstances should I not exercise?

Talk to your health care professional before starting or continuing any exercise program. Most pregnant women are able to exercise. You may not be able to exercise if you have:

- Heart and lung issues
- Placenta previa after 26 weeks
- Preeclampsia or pregnancy-induced hypertension
- Severe anemia
- Risk factors for preterm labor or multiples

## What precautions should I take during my workouts?

- Drink plenty of water before, during and after physical activity.
- Wear a supportive sports bra and loose-fitting clothes.
- On hot, humid days, workout inside.
- Avoid lying on your back or standing still for very long. This may cause a drop in blood pressure.

## While exercising, what do I need to be aware of?

If you experience any of the following, stop immediately and call your OB-GYN:

- Bleeding, leaking fluid or gushing from the vagina
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Shortness of breath before you start your workout
- Chest pain
- Muscle weakness (such as the calf) or swelling
- Headache
- Regular uterine contractions

## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

A healthy pregnancy is best for both mom and baby. We have a library of resources to help you stay safe and healthy before, during and after pregnancy.

Visit [GoRedforWomen.org/Pregnancy](https://www.GoRedforWomen.org/Pregnancy) to learn more.

## After giving birth, how soon after can I start exercising?

Being active during pregnancy will make post-delivery exercise easier.

If you had a vaginal delivery, feel good and your health care professional approves, you can start light exercise a few days after giving birth.

If you had complications during delivery or underwent a C-section, wait until your health care professional says it's okay. And if you experience any issues while working out, stop and call your health care team.



## QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR OR NURSE?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional. For example:

**Can I start exercising even if I wasn't very active pre-pregnancy?**

**Should I monitor my heart rate during exercise?**

## MY QUESTIONS: